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Beattie

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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, presented in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast over a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, September 5, 1933.

Hello folks: For the past two or three garden calendar periods I've been talking to you about your "live-at-home" program and how you can produce more of the supplies that you need for your own use. We are going through a great readjustment period and my thought is that the first thing for us to do is to analyze our own situation, see what we need for home use and for the use of any families that may be dependent upon us for their supplies. This done, we can then determine what and how much of these supplies that we can produce at home. I understand that some growers have the idea that they can plant onions and other truck crops for the market on the land taken out of cotton, but there is a clause in the cotton option-benefit contract which specifically restricts the planting of this land to "soil-improvement or erosion-preventing crops or food or feed crops for home use.

I have emphasized the growing of vegetables for home use because they can be grown everywhere and they fill such an important place in the diet. You know how hungry you get for fresh vegetables ~~along~~ in the late winter and early spring before you have anything in your garden? That's nature's way of telling you that something is lacking in your diet. I certainly envy you southern folks who can go to your gardens for fresh vegetables practically every day in the year. Those good turnip greens, collards, winter cabbage, lettuce, green beans and carrots; it makes me hungry just to talk about them.

With all of this wonderful production of fruits and vegetables and our markets well supplied with fresh foods at practically all times of the year, the fact remains that many of us, north and south, who are living on farms have certain gaps in our supply of fruits and vegetables for home use. These gaps occur mostly in midsummer for you southern folks and in late winter for you northern folks. As I have said so often you southern farmers can fill these gaps by keeping your home gardens growing all-the-year-round. You northern farmers must rely on the markets at certain times or close these gaps in your food supply by means of canned and stored products.

Tomatoes are one of the garden products that lose very little of their flavor or food value in canning. The root crops and cabbage may be kept in splendid shape by storage. Take sweet potatoes for example, and sweet potatoes are being grown over about two-thirds of the country, if you allow your sweets to become reasonably mature, then dig them carefully to avoid cutting or bruising them, then dry them in the sun for a couple of hours and cure them in a special storage house or room at a temperature of about 85 degrees with stove

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heat and plenty of ventilation for about ten days or two weeks, you will then have no trouble keeping them all winter or even until sweet potatoes come again. I keep my sweets on a shelf near my furnace in my basement and they keep fine. The Department and States people have done a lot of work on this matter of the best methods for keeping sweet potatoes and we can give you the latest information.

Dr. Wm. Stuart and his associates in the Horticultural Division of the Department have done a wonderful work in determining the proper temperatures and other conditions for storing our common or white potatoes. They have found that if the potatoes are kept at a temperature below 40 or even below 50 degrees that the starch changes to sugar and as a result the potatoes are moist when cooked and have a poor flavor. In other words, in order to produce the best table stock the potatoes should be well ripened and then kept at a temperature of 50 degrees or a little higher. That to my mind is good news for you folks who must depend upon ordinary cellar storage for your home supply of potatoes for it is comparatively easy to maintain a temperature around 50 or 55 degrees in an ordinary house cellar.

Squashes and pumpkins also store best at relatively high temperatures. The growers of Hubbard and Boston Marrow squashes in New England store their squashes in buildings that are heated by means of stoves. They do not allow their squashes to become frosted or chilled but gather them in time and place them on shelves in the heated houses. When it comes to storing apples, carrots, turnips beets, cabbage, winter radishes, celery and onions we want low temperatures well down toward freezing. All of this illustrates the point that we can't simply throw everything together under the same conditions and expect results. We've simply got to take stock of our whole living plan and provide inexpensive ways of producing and caring for the foods and other supplies that we need for our own use. First we need to budget our food supply, determine what we should add to our present program of home production, then set about to fill in the gaps and add to the variety. The fall and the winter is a good time to make our plans and to get land in shape for growing our home supplies next season. Let's start now and I'll be with you, giving you all of the information that I can dig out of the great storehouse of knowledge here in the United States Department of Agriculture, but first of all get everuthing your State extension workers have to offer.